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Operational activities for development: South-South cooperation for development

State of South-South cooperation

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 70/222, assesses the concrete measures taken by the United Nations development system to improve its support to South-South cooperation initiatives at the national, regional and global levels over the reporting period (2015-2016). In addition, it highlights a number of actions taken by the United Nations development system to guide the application of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report concludes with a few recommendations on the way forward.

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I. Background

1. The need for enhanced cooperation among developing countries is taking on new meaning in the global development landscape. Notably, the role of South-South cooperation is emphasized in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see General Assembly resolution 70/1), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (see General Assembly resolution 69/313) and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

2. The international community thus underscored, in its agenda-setting processes of 2015, the importance of sharing lessons and innovative practices of the South during the implementation of key global frameworks. It is recognized that when equipped with proven Southern solutions, the United Nations system can play a catalytic role to spur more impactful South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.

3. Another reason behind calls for enhanced South-South cooperation is the resilience of emerging economies that continue to be major contributors to socioeconomic transformation in the developing world in spite of volatilities in the global economy. In 2015, China boosted its support to South-South cooperation with major announcements of setting up two funds worth $5.1 billion[1] to help developing countries to address climate change and implement the 2030 Agenda. India also announced a $10 billion concessional line of credit to Africa over the next five years.[2]

4. Many other initiatives attest to the increasing importance of South-South cooperation as a growing dimension of international cooperation for development. Interregional South-South summits held in 2015, most notably the India-Africa Forum Summit, the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation, the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and the Summit of South American-Arab Countries (ASPA), convened to set strategies and agendas, enhance policy coordination and launch joint initiatives that have also become key means of bolstering South-South trade and investment, and infrastructure development, among numerous other exchanges relevant to the attainment of sustainable development. These formal gatherings result in concrete action plans and resources focused on strengthening Southern collaboration in areas of strategic importance such as health, agriculture and infrastructure development.

5. The contribution of South-South cooperation to development is also increasingly seen in the emergence of subregional and regional development banks that are supplementing development finance provided by traditional multilateral and existing regional development banks. Similarly, Southern national development banks that operate globally and Southern-led multilateral banks also hold out considerable promise for the acceleration of sustainable development through South-South cooperation.

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[1] www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/25/us-china-joint-presidential-statement-climate-change; http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zt_usvisit/news/201509/20150901125972.shtml.

[2] Report of the Secretary-General on trends and progress in international development cooperation (E/2016/65), para. 25.

6. Some of the new regional banks, such as the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, are designed to operate within and across regions. A number of Southern national banks are similarly designed to invest at the regional or international level in order to provide external finance as part of their operations. In 2014, the stock of loans disbursed by the China Development Bank, the Export and Import Bank of China and the Brazilian National Development Bank amounted to $1,762 billion, equal to more than five times the amount of loans of $328 billion provided by the World Bank.[3]

7. Against that backdrop, the United Nations system has continued the trend highlighted in my two previous reports on the state of South-South cooperation in 2014 (A/69/153) and 2015 (A/70/344). As requested by Member States, the present report provides an account of steps taken by the United Nations development system to enhance coherence and coordinated support to South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation based on information provided by various United Nations organizations and the research conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).

II. State of support by the United Nations development system to South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

8. Guided by the outcomes of the transformative global processes that took place during the biennium, South-South and triangular cooperation approaches continue to be increasingly integrated into the policy frameworks and strategies of the United Nations system with a view to improving their programmatic and operational support at the country, regional and global levels in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through the work of United Nations country teams, the reporting period also witnessed an increase in the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into United Nations Development Frameworks.[4]

A. Integration of South-South cooperation into policy frameworks and strategies

9. Having incorporated South-South and triangular cooperation into their strategic plans for 2014-2017, many specialized agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system have transitioned to formulating new strategies, policy frameworks and operational guidelines on South-South and triangular cooperation. Some have revised their existing tools and strategies, aligning them with the 2030 Agenda towards the mainstreaming of South-South approaches into their policies and programmatic activities. Several illustrative examples are presented below.

10. South-South cooperation is reflected in the World Food Programme (WFP) strategic plan for 2014-2017 as a means of advancing progress towards the Zero Hunger Challenge objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals. Having put in

[3] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *Trade and Development Report 2015*. Available from http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tdr2015_en.pdf.

[4] www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/dialogue-briefing-proposals-undoco-director.pdf.

place its policy on South-South and triangular cooperation in 2015, WFP has taken measures to expand its engagement with developing countries in the implementation of Goal 2. To further support the implementation of this policy, WFP is finalizing a how-to guide on the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation approaches into its regular programmatic work at the country and regional levels.

11. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in its strategic plan for 2014-2017, recognizes South-South cooperation as a "particular area of upstream work" and a critical means in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The creation of a corporate unit and a related project dedicated to promoting South-South cooperation has given further impetus to these efforts. UNFPA is now designing its new corporate plan for South-South cooperation as a means of contributing to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Conference and the 2030 Agenda.

12. South-South cooperation is now fully integrated into the Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan and Programme of Work and Budget for 2014-2017 of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Since the launch of its corporate strategy for South-South cooperation in 2013, FAO has expanded its vision and scope for South-South cooperation, including through adopting a wider range of approaches and strengthened partnerships in support of its strategic objectives and regional initiatives. Its dedicated South-South units at the global and regional levels provide support to initiate, implement and backstop South-South initiatives. South-South cooperation is actively promoted at the country level as a key means to deliver on the priorities specified in the country programming frameworks, and a new Quick Guide to South-South Cooperation, alongside other tools, has been developed to further support those efforts.

13. With South-South and triangular cooperation accorded high priority in its Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has drafted its first corporate strategy to scale up its support to South-South cooperation and to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The document highlights the role of national capacity and universal access to knowledge as development multipliers in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The corporate strategy has benefited from extensive consultations with Member States, UNOSSC and a wide range of stakeholders, and it will serve as a living document to guide the Organization to further strengthen its support to South-South cooperation through its operational work at global, regional and country levels.

14. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has integrated South-South and triangular cooperation into its programme and budget for 2016-2017, which foresee South-South networks, cross-learning, interregional cooperation and partnerships as key elements in the implementation of its development strategy. Furthermore, South-South cooperation is reflected in its global flagship programme "Building social protection floors for all".

15. South-South cooperation was also accorded high priority in the strategic plans and policy frameworks of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. In its medium-term strategy for 2014-2017, UNEP has recognized opportunities to enhance partnerships and the coherence and efficiency of its work through South-South cooperation. UNV, guided by its strategic framework, its youth volunteering strategy and its partnerships

strategy for 2014-2017, has continued to mobilize many specialized professionals from programme countries to deliver a wide range of development activities in other programme countries.

16. UNOSSC has revised the framework of operational guidelines on the United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation, aligning them with the 2030 Agenda. This will facilitate the development or revision of existing agency-specific guidelines and strategies on South-South cooperation with a view to further guiding South-South efforts in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

B. Steps taken by the United Nations system to strengthen support to South-South and triangular cooperation

17. Over the 2015-2016 reporting period, many United Nations organizations, funds and programmes have established themselves as effective brokers of South-South knowledge and continued to implement South-South cooperation programmes and initiatives targeted towards capacity-building. Increasing support has taken place in the areas of policy dialogue and development; research and analysis; capacity development; creation of Southern knowledge networks and centres of excellence; sharing of data and information; financing and partnerships; and monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Policy dialogue and development

18. One noteworthy trend during the reporting period is the number of forums convened for government ministers and other key policymakers on South-South cooperation. Such forums have addressed the application of South-South cooperation towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in key areas, including the improvement of agriculture and food systems, environment and climate change, population, health, energy security and smart cities.

19. During the review period, FAO convened and supported a number of high-level forums and events to facilitate policy dialogue and promote consensus on ending hunger and improving food security and nutrition. One important event was a symposium held in Brussels in February 2016 on Integrated Rural Development: Strengthening Women and Youth Empowerment through Jobs and Entrepreneurship, co-organized by the secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP Group), FAO and the International Organization of la Francophonie, and supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. Participants representing national governments, civil society, the private sector and others shared experiences and developed an action plan on how South-South and triangular cooperation could be mobilized to advance the ACP Group's strategic priorities for women and youth in agriculture and rural areas using sustainable food systems. In addition, at the thirty-fourth session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City in March 2016, participants comprising ministers and other high-level government officials agreed to apply South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as effective means of implementing the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025.

20. UNEP is placing South-South cooperation at the forefront of global and regional policy debates on environment and climate-change issues. In May 2016,

UNEP convened an event on the theme "Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through innovative South-South cooperation", which contributed to a better understanding of how innovative South-South partnerships on environmental issues could be leveraged to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Another event, co-organized with the China National Development and Reform Commission in November 2015, brought together more than 150 delegates from developing countries, international organizations and financial institutions to exchange practical experiences and discuss how South-South cooperation could be applied in the fields of energy, climate resilience, smart cities and big data. Participants at another UNEP-supported high-level meeting identified priority areas and discussed practical ways in which South-South cooperation could be mainstreamed into climate-change initiatives and mechanisms.

21. High-level forums organized by UNFPA contributed to advancing South-South policy in the areas of population and development towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Ministerial Strategic Dialogue, co-organized in March 2016 with Partners in Population and Development (PPD) and the Government of China, resulted in the Beijing Call for Action, with commitments to promote South-South cooperation in the areas of population and development over the next five years. The Call for Action recommended the creation of an International Forum on South-South Cooperation in Population and Development, to be housed in the PPD secretariat, and a Coordinating Committee for South-South Cooperation in Population and Development to identify and coordinate support to concrete South-South cooperation programmes focused on responding to country needs, and particularly on matching needs for and offers of South-South cooperation, with its secretariat to be hosted by UNFPA.

22. The World Health Organization (WHO) organized and/or supported various high-level knowledge-sharing events in the areas of health and development. A regional workshop organized in March 2015 by its Regional Office for the Americas, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), brought together participants from ministries of health, international organizations and subregional entities to discuss practical ways to advance cooperation within the region on health development. At the workshop, existing forms of technical cooperation among countries were reviewed with the aim of improving the approaches used to facilitate experience-sharing and enhance engagement in non-health sectors. In April 2015, WHO supported the Eleventh Pacific Health Ministers Meeting, a forum for the exchange of information among small island developing countries in the Western Pacific region, which was attended by 19 island countries in the region. Also in 2015, the WHO Regional Offices for the Western Pacific and for Africa supported the Second Ministerial Forum on China-Africa Health Development organized on the theme "Promoting the availability of health-care service in Africa: improving China-Africa's cooperation in public health in the post-Ebola era". The meeting brought together health ministers from Africa, government officials from China and representatives of international organizations to discuss the future of China-Africa cooperation in the areas of health and development.

23. In 2015, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) supported the Investing in Africa Forum, a global platform for multilateral cooperation and the promotion of accelerated and responsible investment and investment partnerships in African countries, both from China and elsewhere as well as within Africa, particularly for the light manufacturing sector.

24. UNDP supported developing countries in strengthening their voice in the Sustainable Development Goals negotiations and several high-level South-South cooperation policy dialogues in preparation for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. It also supported the Government of India in organizing the Global Conference on South-South Cooperation in March 2016, which looked at issues such as South-South cooperation and the global economy, the institutional architecture for South-South cooperation, regional growth and integration, and the role of Southern think tanks. UNDP also organized the first South-South cooperation consultation meeting in Africa in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Important outcomes include the promotion of policy dialogue on monitoring and evaluation and the inclusive participation of civil society organizations and the private sector in South-South cooperation. The discussion points highlighted in relation to these topics will be institutionalized and taken forward by the New Partnership for Africa's Development through the African Union.

25. The effective implementation of the plans of action resulting from increasing dialogues on South-South cooperation is an imperative that Member States need to effectively pursue with the support of the United Nations system where appropriate.

Research and analysis

26. The research findings and analytical work of the United Nations system contribute greatly to policy dialogue and development regarding South-South and triangular cooperation in strategic areas relating to sustainable development. Only a select few are presented here to illustrate the work of the United Nations system in this area.

27. The periodic analytical reports of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have been a primary guide for policymakers in developing countries, especially with regard to regional and thematic South-South issues on trade, finance and investment. For example, in the 2015 edition of its flagship publication, the *Trade and Development Report*,[5] UNCTAD highlighted the catalytic role that the new Southern-led multilateral banks could play in changing the conditions and the approach of existing multilateral financing institutions and emphasized the need to include those banks in a network of other national, regional and multilateral development banks and create synergies and complementarities among them so as to improve the provision of long-term financing for development. The 2015 edition of the *Least Developed Countries* report[6] emphasized the transformation of rural economies as a central factor in accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and noted the role that South-South cooperation could play in those efforts. Another 2015 report examined the global value chains-South-South trade nexus and presented options for policymakers on those issues.[7]

28. During the biennium, ILO produced over 15 reports and publications on South-South and triangular cooperation, covering a wide range of topics relating to

[5] http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tdr2015_en.pdf.
[6] http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ldc2015_en.pdf.
[7] http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/gdsecidc2015d1_en.pdf.

child labour, social protection and others. Through its analytical work, research and publications, ILO strives to shape policies, including through enhancing awareness of the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in advancing the decent work agenda in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, its 2015 publication entitled *Triangular Cooperation and Decent Work: Good Practices* aims at clarifying the concept and definitions of triangular cooperation and provides examples of good practices in triangular cooperation. As part of the "Social Protection in Action: Building Social Protection Floors" Country Note Series, 24 country briefs were published during 2015-2016 to promote the exchange of knowledge and highlight good practices from the South.

29. In 2015, the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil produced a series of three studies on food and social policies, with a focus on public food procurement in Brazil and its impact on food and nutritional security and smallholder farming. The Centre is also supporting the African Union in conducting a comprehensive baseline study on the relevance and impact of school feeding programmes in African countries as a continental strategy.

30. The research activities of many other specialized agencies such as WHO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are built into their partnership networks. WHO continues to work through its network of collaborating institutions to monitor and share information on health. PAHO signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ibero-American General Secretariat to facilitate the exchange of experiences and data, assessment and reporting on South-South cooperation. A programme of work has been developed and a document entitled "Data on South-South cooperation in health in Ibero-America" will be presented at the Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Health to be held in September 2016. UNESCO continued to strengthen the policy, technical and research capacities of developing countries through its centres of excellence, its professionalized networks (Associated Schools Project Network, Man and the Biosphere Programme, and the International Hydrological Programme), the UNESCO Chairs Programme, and the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

31. Through a South-South cooperation project, UNEP support to Mongolia and other countries in Central Asia to enhance their research capacity in the areas of green investment and the water sector is a model worth emulating. As part of this project, UNEP provided support for researchers from Central Asia and Mongolia to participate in a six-week fellowship programme at Beijing Normal University, and it contributed to a green economy scoping report for Central Asia to be launched in 2016.

32. In 2015, UNV launched the *State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Transforming Governance*.[8] The report examines how formal and informal volunteers are building alliances horizontally across borders and vertically from the local to the global level to strengthen voice and participation in good governance and sustainable development.

33. UNDP in 2015 provided support to Southern think tank networks such as the Network of Southern Think-Tanks (NeST) and Southern Voice to produce evidence-

[8] www.volunteeractioncounts.org/SWVR2015-frame/21337%20-%20SWVR%20report%20-%20ENGLISH%20-%20web%201.pdf.

based analyses and frameworks to inform policy dialogues on South-South and triangular cooperation. Case studies will be disseminated at different policy dialogues throughout 2016. UNDP and UNOSSC are supporting the establishment of the Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks for South-South Cooperation to bring forward voices and knowledge from various networks involving over 100 think tanks to date, so as to facilitate their joint efforts to inform the global policy dialogues and agenda-setting on South-South cooperation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

34. As research and analysis on South-South cooperation grows, so does the need for improved coordination of these efforts to maximize their benefits.

Capacity development

35. In response to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and General Assembly resolutions that called for enhanced support to national capacities, United Nations organizations have implemented South-South cooperation programmes and initiatives aimed at strengthening the human and institutional capacities of developing countries in the implementation of national plans and strategies. Support took various forms, including the organization of training workshops and technical and scientific exchanges led by centres of excellence.

36. FAO continued to enhance the capacity of developing countries through a range of activities, including facilitating knowledge exchanges and technologies, fostering knowledge management and networks, and mobilizing broader-based partnerships and resources for South-South initiatives. To date, its main partners in South-South capacity-building programmes are Brazil and China. Other emerging South-South partners are Mexico, Morocco and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and Japan and the Republic of Korea for triangular cooperation. Over 80 Southern countries have benefited from South-South capacity-building programmes in areas such as food and nutrition security and crop intensification and diversification. Through the current FAO-China South-South Cooperation Trust Fund, for instance, a total of 287 Chinese experts and technicians have been deployed to nine countries in Africa, and capacities have been enhanced through knowledge-sharing and technology transfer in diverse areas such as hybrid rice technologies, fisheries policy and aquaculture feed technologies, tropical agriculture platforms and rural renewable energy.

37. UNEP has organized several expert meeting and capacity-building training workshops on environment-related issues. In 2015, a South-South exchange and training workshop was co-organized with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Tongji University, China, which brought together mayors and department heads from 16 African cities and their counterparts in China to exchange experiences on greener economies. Another capacity-building and experience-exchange networking session was organized for the focal points of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production in West Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, with a particular focus on sustainable building and construction. Also in 2015, an Africa-Asia meeting of experts was convened to facilitate experience-sharing among experts from Africa, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China on the use of specific enforcement tools and their application in countries, with an impact in strengthening the enforcement of environmental laws.

38. WHO has partnered with leading health institutions in Latin America in the formulation of South-South cooperation programmes aimed at strengthening national capacities in the region to implement national plans and strategies in health. One such fruitful collaboration was with the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) Center for International Relations in Health (CRIS), a think tank with the mission of improving public health in Brazil through various cross-cutting activities such as research and development; production of vaccines, drugs and medicines; training of human resources; information and communication in health; and the implementation of social programmes. In November 2015, a South-South cooperation programme was launched in collaboration with Fiocruz/CRIS to enhance the capacities of ministries of health in the region in policymaking and development of national strategies in health. The first of a series of capacity-building sessions was organized in October 2015 for decision makers in the areas of South-South cooperation, global health diplomacy, global health governance and resource mobilization.

39. UNESCO also works to enhance the capacities of developing countries through the Malaysia-UNESCO Cooperation Programme (MUCP). Since it became operational in 2013, MUCP has grown into a spectrum of projects amounting to $5.7 million, largely benefiting countries in Asia and the Pacific and Africa. It draws on the expertise of Malaysian Category 2 centres established under the auspices of UNESCO, including the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation (ISTIC) and the Regional Humid Tropics Hydrology and Water Resources Centre for South-East Asia and the Pacific. MUCP projects include education for sustainable development in Pacific Island countries, building the capacity of Indian Ocean Member States in tsunami preparedness and response, reforms of education systems to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, upscaling water security community-based management at World Heritage sites, and strengthening science, technology, engineering and mathematics curricula for girls in Africa and the Asia and the Pacific region.

40. In UNDP, work on capacity development has focused on building national capacities to plan, manage and monitor South-South cooperation and to use such cooperation in accelerating development progress. It has also provided support to Southern partners in tackling policies, laws and regulations that are hampering their engagement in South-South cooperation. For example, UNDP is supporting Brazil in strengthening its knowledge management of South-South mechanisms, enabling better adaptability to the local context in partner countries. UNDP assisted the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation and the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency in consolidating experiences and strengthening institutional capacities as providers of South-South cooperation. In Indonesia, it supported the establishment of a national coordination mechanism for South-South cooperation and played a pivotal role in strengthening the national institution under the Ministry of National Development and Planning responsible for the management of South-South and triangular cooperation. With the support of UNDP, the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development was established to support African and other developing countries in the formulation and implementation of South-South cooperation programmes in agriculture, energy, health, information technology and telecommunication, and transport. In Iraq, UNDP supported the Government in establishing a South-South cooperation unit in the Prime Minister's Advisory Commission.

41. Capacity-building in the formulation of national policies on trade, investment and finance issues is at the core of UNCTAD work. Support in this area is provided through the organization of high-level expert meetings, training workshops and seminars. The Wuhan Seminar is one initiative of the Government of China supported by UNCTAD and dedicated to enhance the institutional and policymaking capabilities of policymakers in Africa through the provision of best practices and effective development policies relevant to African countries.

42. Through its field offices, UNFPA supports around 100 South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, which, among others, are aimed at enhancing national capacities in the formulation and implementation of policies relating to population and reproductive health. Through its programmes, UNFPA helps Governments to identify national capacities and needs and brokers knowledge with the aim of enhancing national capacities to implement effective policies on population, gender, reproductive health and related issues.

Establishment of Southern knowledge networks and centres of excellence

43. A key feature of the above-mentioned institutional capacity development efforts of the United Nations system is the support to the creation and strengthening of Southern networks and centres of excellence, which have continued during the period under review.

44. The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil continues to offer top-notch policy and technical advisory services aimed at enhancing the technical and institutional capabilities of developing countries to formulate, execute and manage sustainable school feeding programmes. By 2016, the Centre had supported more than 35 developing countries in designing and implementing their national school feeding strategies and programmes. Building on this success, WFP is expanding its partnerships with other developing countries that have rich experience in improving food security and nutrition. On 2 March 2016, a memorandum of understanding was signed between WFP and the Government of China to launch its new WFP China Office, which will serve as a WFP centre of excellence for rural transformation. A letter of intent was also signed with the Government of India in January 2016 to explore the possibility of establishing a WFP centre of excellence on food and nutrition security in India.

45. UNDP, through its thematic centres of excellence, including those in Brazil, Singapore and Turkey, continued to undertake cross-cutting research, document solutions, prepare policy briefs and support knowledge outreach and networks as well as facilitate policy dialogue forums. UNDP is assisting the Regional Hub of Civil Service in Astana, Kazakhstan, in facilitating global knowledge exchanges and South-South sharing of experiences on effective civil service systems, with over 34 countries and, five international bodies involved to date. In 2015, UNDP and the Government of Aruba launched the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Development for Small Island Developing States, which aims to strengthen innovation and resilience in such States and facilitate South-South cooperation on issues such as renewable energy, climate resilience, water, tourism, environment and public health. In 2015, a memorandum of understanding was signed between UNDP and the Development Research Centre of the State Council of China to undertake various strategic initiatives, including research on sustainable development issues, poverty reduction and green growth, as well as to enhance the South-South and

global cooperation of China. UNDP has also provided technical support to the Government of China in the creation of the Centre for International Knowledge on Development. UNDP and UNOSSC supported the establishment of the Global Research Consortium on Economic Transformation, with 31 institutions joining the network to promote economic structural transformation through South-South cooperation. In the Arab States region, UNDP is supporting several initiatives that focus on knowledge exchange and capacity development. For example, in Bahrain, it is the founding sponsor of Middle East and North Africa Public Administration Research (MENAPAR), a network of professionals and organizations in the region with an interest in research on public administration.

46. Over the last two years, FAO has focused on strengthening Southern knowledge centres: five Chinese research and training institutions were certified and designated as FAO reference centres in May 2014: the Biogas Research Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture of China, the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences, the Foreign Economic Cooperation Centre, the Freshwater Fisheries Research Centre of the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences and the Hunan Hybrid Rice Research Centre. A partnership agreement with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences was also signed in November 2015. Additional South-South agreements were signed with institutions in Brazil (the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation) and Costa Rica (the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre).

47. Discussions with Brazil are under way in order for the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth in Brasilia to become a strategic partner of UNOSSC in efforts to bolster the research and analytical capacity of the Office.

48. Support to centres of excellence for knowledge exchange is also provided by the United Nations regional commissions. The International Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Centre of Excellence of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is one good example of such support that is created to reduce the time, cost and inefficiencies that hamper the development and implementation of PPPs. The Centre disseminates international best practices and standards in such partnerships and helps national governments to provide training for public officials and other stakeholders. The PPP Business Advisory Board supports governments in implementing the partnerships through high-level national and regional consultations. A number of specialized centres are being established to assist countries in adapting the PPP standards to their local conditions and developing a successful pipeline of PPP projects.

49. Greater networking and participation of Southern centres of excellence in the thematic deliberations of the High-level Committee could help to enrich the application of South-South cooperation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Sharing of data and information

50. During the biennium 2015-2016, the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds continued to be engaged in data-collection and dissemination of information on South-South cooperation relating to their areas of competence through networks, virtual knowledge platforms, web portals and other tools that were created for such purposes.

51. South-South cooperation initiatives supported and implemented by FAO are regularly monitored and data are presented in an interactive map on its website. In 2015, FAO launched the South-South Cooperation Gateway, an online platform showcasing Southern institutions and experts in the field of food security and agriculture. Important information on the expertise of an institution, its portfolio of South-South activities, national focal point and roster of experts provided to FAO by the national government is accessible through this platform. The Gateway is intended to facilitate direct engagement in South-South and triangular cooperation activities between countries and institutions or indirectly through FAO. Good practices and success stories in South-South cooperation supported by FAO are also disseminated though other online sources, including "FAO's Quick Guide to South-South Cooperation".

52. The Sustainable Development Goals Fund created by UNDP has established mechanisms for knowledge exchange on a wide range of development issues. An online library of good practices and lessons learned in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, including those pertaining to South-South cooperation, has been created for use by the United Nations system. The Fund also supports peer-to-peer exchanges of knowledge and experiences in development among programme countries.

53. ILO has created virtual platforms to gather and disseminate information on issues relating to the decent work agenda. The social protection platform brings together experts from the North and the South in the sharing of their experiences with social protection issues and facilitates dissemination of regular scholarly articles and publications on the topic. To assist the organization of an interregional South-South and triangular cooperation learning and networking event that will be held in September 2016, ILO has created a virtual academy on South-South cooperation. The platform will facilitate networking and collaboration of policymakers, practitioners, researchers and other partners from all around the world on South-South and triangular cooperation issues relating to child labour, job creation, climate change and green jobs, city-to-city cooperation, and the social and solidarity economy, among others.

54. Through its virtual learning platform, the Pacific Open Learning Health Net (POLHN), the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific aims to improve the quality and standards of health professionals in the region by offering free and practical online courses. Since its creation, POLHN has delivered equitable, scalable and localized online, continuing professional educational courses to health-care professionals in the Pacific countries. In a similar effort, the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia convened a regional consultation on South-South and triangular cooperation in 2015 to initiate the launching of initiatives, including the creation of a knowledge web portal to enhance networking and provide up-to-date information to health professionals in countries in the region.

55. UNEP has established a South-South cooperation community of practice to bring together relevant resource persons to develop common definitions and facilitate good practices relating to the environment. Through the establishment of a knowledge-sharing network, it assisted 20 countries (16 in Africa, 2 in Eastern Europe and 2 in Central Asia) to share their experiences in the ratification process, adopt a common workplan for 2015-2016 and share experiences in implementing the Nagoya Protocol.

Financing and partnerships

56. Adequate and sustained financial resources are critical to engage in fruitful and mutually beneficial South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives. While not all organizations of the United Nations system have a fixed regular programming budget for South-South cooperation, many have put in place various financing mechanisms through which South-South and triangular cooperation are supported.

57. UNEP formed partnerships with Southern providers of South-South cooperation, such as Brazil and China, to secure financing for various environment-related South-South and triangular cooperation projects. For instance, through the $6 million UNEP China Trust Fund, various South-South capacity-building projects have been implemented during the past three years. Through the Brazil Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation, $5.2 million has been secured to support various South-South projects across the subprogrammes of UNEP.

58. In the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), most South-South activities are financed primarily through its country programme, project and grant activities. For instance, in 2015 a $3.5 million grant was provided to a non-profit organization to identify, catalogue and share innovative and successful initiatives relating to rural development with countries in Latin America, Western and Central Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa. An additional $300,000 has been dedicated by its South-South Cooperation Unit to support other similar initiatives.

59. In ILO, about $20 million has been dedicated to support South-South cooperation during the past biennium, while 2 per cent of the UNCTAD programme budget is for South-South cooperation. South-South and triangular cooperation activities are supported through various country, regional and global programmes in UNDP and WHO.

60. UNDP supports integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into its global, regional and country programme budgets. As of 2015, 16 per cent of UNDP projects have utilized South-South and triangular cooperation as a modality to deliver results. In addition, UNDP has committed to allocate an annual amount that will not fall below $3.5 million for the period of the UNOSSC strategic framework, that is, a total of $14 million for the period 2014-2017.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

61. Monitoring and evaluation tools are being designed by organizations of the United Nations system to assess the contribution of their support to South-South and triangular cooperation to sustainable development. WFP, UNV, UNDP and many other organizations have integrated South-South cooperation into periodic reporting to their governing bodies in addition to reporting their activities to sessions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

C. United Nations support for regional and interregional South-South cooperation

62. During the reporting period, organizations of the United Nations system, including the five regional economic commissions, undertook a wide range of

activities, including policy research and analysis, convening of high-level forums for policy dialogue, policy coordination, establishment and/or strengthening of centres of excellence and other capacity-building initiatives that are aimed at the implementation of regional development plans, frameworks and strategies.

63. In their advocacy and convening role, some organizations have worked closely with regional institutions to promote the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation into regional frameworks in the implementation of regional treaties and development plans. For example, at the 20th meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in March 2016 in Cartagena, Colombia, the Ministers of the Environment in the region acknowledged the significant increase in South-South linkages in the region and agreed to further strengthen South-South cooperation as an effective means of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

64. FAO works closely with regional and interregional institutions, including the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, CELAC and the ACP Group to ensure that South-South and triangular approaches are mainstreamed into regional and interregional frameworks and strategies on food and nutritional security. One benefit of such support by FAO is the decision by Ministers of Agriculture in CELAC in March 2016 to employ more South-South approaches in the implementation of the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition, and Hunger Eradication 2025.

65. WFP provides administrative, technical and human resources to the African Risk Capacity (ARC), a specialized agency of the African Union that provides Pan-African risk management services, including risk insurance against droughts, floods and other natural disasters, to 32 countries in the region. Following a poor agricultural season in the Sahel, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal received payouts from ARC of over $26 million in February 2015, for example. That enabled the three Governments to deliver timely assistance to 1.3 million people with a combined total of over half a million livestock. UNESCO promotes regional South-South cooperation through its centres of excellence, with the aim of enhancing capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and research. UNESCO, through its Operational Strategy for Priority Africa, 2014-2021, has supported African States, the African Union and the regional communities in the implementation of policies and programmes promoting regional and continental integration. This includes programmes that strengthen cross-border inter-community cohesion through education and culture and promote the peaceful management of cross-border resources, knowledge-sharing and intellectual cooperation between States.

66. UNDP has mobilized subregional and regional actors in the implementation of various South-South cooperation initiatives that have contributed to regional integration efforts. For example, it is supporting the United Nations Social Impact Fund for the South to use the "blended financing model" to develop public-private-social partnerships in the South to support the expansion of social businesses. In 2015, the Fund supported the first ASEAN Impact Challenge and provided capacity-building to more than 20 social businesses from 10 countries. UNDP also signed a memorandum of understanding with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Development Fund to support social enterprises in eight SAARC countries and strengthen knowledge-sharing through South-South cooperation. In Africa, UNDP collaborated with the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS) in developing the Knowledge Gateway for Disaster Risk Reduction and Information Sharing Platform for West Africa to be managed by the ECOWAS Disaster Risk Reduction Division. UNDP has also supported the States members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to plan, implement and coordinate disaster emergency and conflict prevention activities in the Horn of Africa under the Institutional Strengthening Action Plan Framework. Additionally, in the Arab States region, UNDP provided support to the capacities in the League of Arab States to better deliver its functions relating to regional economic integration, gender, climate change and crisis response. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP in Quito organized and facilitated a session on South-South cooperation and local development at the Latin American and Caribbean Forum on Territorial Economic Development. The workshop identified common needs and opportunities for cooperation on local development in diverse areas.

67. The five regional economic commissions continue to serve as reservoirs of research products on critical socioeconomic issues facing their member States. One noteworthy work in this area is the *Africa Regional Integration Index — Report 2016*, a joint effort of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). In the light of the paramount significance of data and information for the regional integration efforts, the Index aims to plug the knowledge gap on regional integration by tracking how the eight regional economic communities (RECs) of the continent and countries within each community are performing on regional integration overall and by priority areas, and provides the evidence base for effective integration efforts in the region.

68. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) serves as the main framework for promoting South-South and triangular cooperation in the subregion, offering a platform for South-South policy dialogue, exchanges of best practices and capacity-building on regional economic and environmental cooperation. It is managed jointly by ECE and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and includes Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. ECE and ESCAP support efforts of SPECA participating countries through the following thematic project working groups: water and energy resources; transport and border crossing; trade; statistics; knowledge-based development; and gender and the economy. The Economic Forum and Governing Council of SPECA, at its tenth session, held on 10 November 2015 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, concluded that strengthened subregional coordination was an important precondition for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

III. Coordination and coherence of United Nations support to South-South cooperation

69. One noteworthy action taken by the Administrator of UNDP in early 2015 was the establishment of the Task Team on South-South and Triangular Cooperation under the aegis of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), co-chaired by UNOSSC and ILO. More than 22 specialized agencies, programmes and funds and other organizations of the United Nations system have already designated senior-level focal points to this Task Team. One noteworthy inter-agency initiative led by

UNOSSC, UNDP and the Task Team during the review period was the issuance of the publication entitled *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development*; such practices are relevant to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets. The publication presents 61 successful South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives supported and implemented by the United Nations and other organizations. It will serve as an effective reference tool for United Nations Resident Coordinators, United Nations country teams and other development actors in the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into national development plans and actions for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

70. To facilitate discussions on how to continue this work and engage in other similar joint initiatives, UNOSSC organized an inter-agency meeting on 18 May 2016 in conjunction with the nineteenth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. Representatives from more than 25 United Nations agencies and other multilateral organizations discussed how the above-mentioned good South-South and triangular cooperation practices could be further replicated and scaled up with the support of the United Nations system in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants also agreed on other collaborative work, including in the organization of the 2016 South-South Development Expo that will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30 October to 3 November on the overarching theme "Enhancing innovation towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The Expo will be hosted by the Government of the United Arab Emirates through the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment.

71. UNOSSC has also catalysed other inter-agency thematic initiatives relating to the Sustainable Development Goals. In April 2016, it partnered with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in launching the Southern Climate Partnership Incubator, a South-South initiative in the areas including renewable energy, climate resilience and smart cities. The Initiative, which will be implemented by UNOSSC and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in collaboration with other United Nations entities, is designed to assist developing countries in the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2015, UNOSSC joined the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation, comprising more than 23 United Nations entities and established in response to Member States' call for such a mechanism at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Other fruitful collaborations include the signing of a memorandum of understanding in February 2016 with the Centre for New Structural Economics at Peking University to establish a global research consortium and with the Government of China in May 2016 to launch the Mayors' Forum under the Maritime-Continental Silk Road Cities Alliance global initiative that involved engagement of United Nations organizations such as UNDP, UNESCO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

72. Other catalytic collaborative initiatives were supported through UNOSSC regional offices and partnerships forged to secure funding for scaling up South-South solutions, expertise and technologies at the country and regional levels. For instance, through the Regional Office for Arab States, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, UNOSSC has partnered with IFAD in the

implementation of a partnership initiative on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Agricultural Development and Enhanced Food Security, which aims to enhance the national capacities in agricultural development.

IV. Strengthening and improving the impact, efficiency and effectiveness of UNOSSC

73. In my report to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation at its nineteenth session in May 2016 (SSC/19/2), I presented comprehensive proposals on concrete ways to enhance the role and impact of UNOSSC as well as the key measures taken to improve the coordination and coherence of United Nations support to South-South cooperation in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report highlighted how the Office could be restructured and how its work programme could be reoriented for greater efficiency and effectiveness. As a follow-up to those proposals, on 21 March 2016 I designated the Director of UNOSSC as my Envoy on South-South cooperation. In those two roles, the Envoy/Director is responsible for leading the mainstreaming of South-South and triangular cooperation into the work of the United Nations system, the provision of support to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, and the strengthening of United Nations system-wide efforts and external partnerships for South-South cooperation.

74. The consultations and deliberations before and during the fortieth anniversary of the 1978 adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action in 2018 are expected to generate new ideas and practical ways to strengthen UNOSSC and South-South cooperation across the United Nations system towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. After the General Assembly decides on the option for marking the anniversary, as the High-level Committee noted in its decision 19/1, it is envisaged that under the leadership of the Envoy on South-South Cooperation and the overall guidance of Member States, UNOSSC will be in a good position to effectively provide the requisite secretariat and systematic support to organize the commemoration.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

75. The present report highlights notable efforts by the United Nations system to support the integration of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation into United Nations Development Frameworks as well as their policies and programmatic work towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I welcome these initiatives and encourage the UNDG South-South and Triangular Cooperation Task Team and the United Nations country teams to continue the mapping and documentation of good practices in South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, particularly those that are relevant to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

76. Additionally, I invite Member States, United Nations country teams and all relevant development partners to support the widespread replication or adaptation of good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation in order to optimize the benefits to be accrued from the application of Southern development solutions to the attainment of sustainable development.

77. Given the growing number of forums convened for Government ministers and other policymakers to discuss South-South cooperation in addressing challenges in key areas such as environment and climate change, agriculture and food systems, population, urbanization and health, United Nations organizations and agencies should, in a coordinated manner, effectively monitor and support the effective implementation of action plans agreed upon during such deliberations.

78. The emerging Southern-led subregional, regional and national development banks make a valuable contribution to South-South and triangular cooperation that should be leveraged to finance regional and other public goods that tend to be overlooked by the private sector.

79. I commend the measures taken by, inter alia, FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNDP, UNEP, WFP and other United Nations organizations that direct their support for South-South cooperation towards the establishment or strengthening of Southern centres of excellence, and I encourage those organizations to increasingly support closer collaboration among such entities through the development or strengthening of their collaborative networks, joint work programmes and funding mechanisms.

80. Considering the increasing number of online platforms dedicated to South-South knowledge-sharing, I encourage UNOSSC and the UNDG South-South and Triangular Cooperation Task Team to design a portal that would enable policymakers and development practitioners in the developing world to gain more access to such knowledge through an inter-agency, one-stop online platform on South-South and triangular cooperation.

81. As the fortieth anniversary of the 1978 adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action draws near, UNOSSC should effectively provide the secretariat and substantive support needed by Member States in marking the event in a manner that enhances the application of South-South cooperation in meeting the goals of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals.